

Continuing The Fight: Fair Funding

Just more than one year ago, I sat down as a member of the Fairs Funding Task Force. We were charged with developing a plan to make up for the loss of parimutuel taxes at horse-racing tracks, the source of fair and youth show funding up until 1999. The legislators and other fair supporters on the task force recommended funding these important youth events at \$3 million per year. I sponsored legislation at that level. Unfortunately, legislative budget writers turned down this request, only including \$2 million per year in the final budget. With the number of powerful groups lobbying legislators and issues such as transportation, the fair funding issue didn't garner priority. But, a special grant of \$100,000 was also included for special fair-grounds projects.

Fairs remain one of the few remaining family-oriented, educational activities that allow children to learn responsibility and earn money for college. The current funding level will allow them to continue them into the future, and I will continue to fight to make sure children in rural areas like the 7th District don't lose opportunities.



State Representative
Bob Sump
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

2001 Legislative Report: Keeping My Word to You



**Representative
Bob Sump
7th District**
**Pend Oreille, Stevens,
Ferry, Lincoln,
Okanogan & Spokane
counties**

Committees:
Natural Resources, co-chair
Agriculture and Environment
Transportation

Olympia office:
405 John L. O'Brien Building
Olympia, Wash. 98504
<http://www.leg.wa.gov>

Telephone:
360-786-7908 or
1-800-562-6000 (Legislative Hotline)

E-mail:
sump_bo@leg.wa.gov

2001 Legislative Report: Keeping My Word to You

Dear friends,

As of this writing, I am back home in the 7th District. While proud to serve as your voice in Olympia, nothing compares to coming home and meeting with the residents of cities and towns throughout Northeast Washington. As we together battle wildfires and suffer through loss of life and property, I feel blessed to be a part of your community.

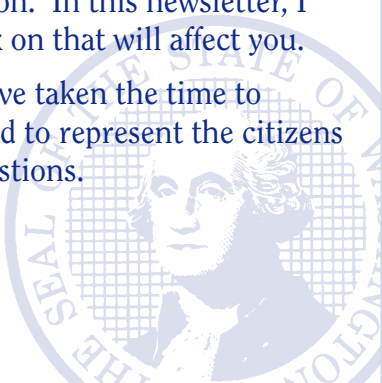
It does seem like an eternity since lawmakers first convened in January. In the time since the year began, the Legislature responded to the effects of a drought and high-cost energy shortage, and worked through three special sessions to address transportation, agriculture disaster relief and other pressing matters.

While the focus remains on things left unfinished, there was a great deal of progress made on issues important to the families of Northeast Washington. In this newsletter, I hope to provide a report on other items I am continuing to work on that will affect you.

I would also like to extend my thanks to those of you who have taken the time to communicate with me over the last several months. I'm honored to represent the citizens of the 7th District, and always welcome your comments and questions.

Sincerely,

Rep. Bob Sump





SPOTLIGHT TRANSPORTATION



Fighting for taxpayers

As of this writing, negotiations on a transportation funding plan have stalled and lawmakers have adjourned for the year while talks continue. The governor and transportation negotiators are working on a multibillion-dollar tax plan to fund highway improvements, ferries and mass transit. A variety of tax hikes are on the table, including a gas tax increase of as much as 9 cents per gallon, an increase in the sales tax on car purchases, and increased weight fees for trucks and recreational vehicles.

There is one simple reason why this state doesn't have a transportation funding package today. From the beginning, all elected officials stated the public should have a chance to vote on any new funds for transportation. This did not happen. We continued negotiations, and I recognized that there are areas of our state in need of transportation improvements to relieve congestion and keep our economy strong. However, the plan on the table is potentially the largest tax increase in our state's history, and asking citizens across the state to pay more to solve the gridlock in urban areas is a decision we should not take lightly.

The time has finally come to realize there is no quick fix for this state's transportation problems. It's going to take a new philosophy to bring our state out of this slump.

While in Olympia, I read the numerous newspaper stories labeling Eastern Washington legislators and their constituents as obstructionists. They would ask why we won't vote to raise the gas tax to build new roads – roads they claim would help us get our agricultural products to the Port of Seattle faster.

I have a question for those in Seattle who seem to know what's best for us: was it Eastern Washington legislators and residents who decided to build two new sports stadiums and a convention center in the pathway of the port? The answer to that is a resounding NO! We did not create the congestion. And we know Gov. Gary Locke's transportation plan won't help us through to the port as he has never committed to a plan that truly increases freight mobility.

Throughout the legislative session, I appreciated the support I received in my attempts to stop taxing the people and insist upon wise decisions throughout state government. From the beginning, I have been willing to listen to all transportation proposals with an open mind. But, I take tax increases very seriously and require proof that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated. Plain and simple, we must build a functional transportation system that meets the needs of the public.



Rep. Bob Sump discusses legislation in the House Natural Resources Committee with Rep. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville. As co-chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, Sump lends the decision-making process on legislation regarding salmon, forests and parks. In addition to the Natural Resource Committee, he serves as a member of the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee and the House Transportation Committee.

Water reform is reality – Finally

It's no exaggeration to say our current drought and power crisis is hurting Eastern Washington. We all know that water is the lifeblood in this arid region. Without it, agriculture here can't exist.

As for irrigation, there's a force as powerful as any drought in preventing them from acquiring water – the Department of Ecology (DOE). The process of getting or transferring a water rights permit takes a very long time. There currently is a backlog of more than 7,000 permits.

Entering the 2001 session, protecting water rights was high on our list of priorities. As a member of the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee, I went to work negotiating water legislation in the House. The result was legislative passage of House Bill 1832, a measure some call the most important water bill in many years.

The measure is expected to reduce the permit backlog and expedite the water rights applications process by creating two lines, one for new rights and the other for changes or transfers. The clarification that local water conservancy boards are authorized to do the legwork on changes and transfers is good news for us. Local people can now make certain decisions about local water use.

Operating Budget: A recipe for tax hikes

Earlier this year, all lawmakers seemed to agree that there were tough decisions to be made in crafting the state's operating budget. The collection of tax revenues was slowing due to our cooling economy, health care and energy costs were rising substantially, teachers and state employees were demanding higher pay raises, and then we had a drought and an earthquake to deal with.

House Republicans proposed a "reality budget," the reality being that we simply didn't have the money to meet all the demands. We were going to have to set priorities and make decisions about where to direct our limited resources, just like families must do when planning their household budgets.

But in the end, the Democrats walked away from the table, choosing to ignore the realities we faced, knowing the decisions that we would have to make would be politically unpopular. What we ended up with is a fantasy budget. It fails to reflect any of the difficult decisions that we agreed must be made.

The Democrat budget that was ultimately adopted spends substantially more than we can afford. It spends \$667 million more than expected revenue, and under very conservative assumptions, the state's general fund will be about \$680 million in the red by the next biennium. It is a tax increase by design, and unfortunately, it has become quite predictable.

In the early 1980s the Legislature engaged in this kind of shortsighted budgeting and ran out of money. Things became so bad that lawmakers imposed a sales tax on our food. Again in the early '90s, the Legislature spent more than it could sustain, and wound up passing the largest tax increase in state history -- \$900 million.

This tax-and-spend approach does a disservice to the taxpayers, as well as those who truly need government assistance, because it puts important programs in jeopardy. Eventually lawmakers will have to raise taxes or cut programs. With the budget we have, those will be our only choices.



Contact me:

I am eager to meet with many of my friends in the 7th District. As I attend community events throughout Northeast Washington, your feedback helps me develop a plan for the 2002 Legislature – which is just around the corner. If you would like me to attend your gathering, or if you have questions about 2001 or suggestions for 2002, please call my Olympia office at:

(360) 786-7908

or use the toll-free hotline at:

1-800-562-6000